

## Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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R 170815Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7239

S E C R E T NAIROBI 0499

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR UG US

SUBJECT: COMMENTS ON AMIN'S REQUEST THAT USG REOPEN EMBASSY  
KAMPALA

REF NAIROBI 0105

1. AS REPORTED REFTTEL, PRESIDENT AMIN OF UGANDA HAS AGAIN PROPOSED REOPENING OF U.S. EMBASSY IN KAMPALA. THIS EMBASSY'S COMMENTS ON ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF REOPENING IN KAMPALA, BASED PARTLY ON IMPRESSIONS AND INFORMATION GAINED BY DCM LINDSTROM DURING HIS JANUARY 4 VISIT TO KAMPALA, ARE SET FORTH IN FOLLOWING PARAS.

2. PRINCIPAL ADVANTAGES OF REOPENING EMBASSY WOULD BE (1) TO FACILITATE REGULAR DIRECT EXCHANGES BETWEEN SENIOR REPRESENTATIVE OF USG AND AN AFRICAN CHIEF OF STATE WHO (WHETHER WE LIKE IT OR NOT) WILL EVEV AFTER HIS OAU CHAIRMANSHIP COMES TO AN END CONTINUE TO EXERCISE CERTAIN AMOUNT OF INFLUENCE IN AFRICAN AFFAIRS AND (2) TO COUNTER-BALANCE INFLUENCE OF LARGE COMMUNIST DIPLOMATIC PRESENCE IN KAMPALA. IN ADDITION, UGANDA IS A SIZEABLE AND POTENTIALLY IMPORTANT AFRICAN COUNTRY WITH SIGNIFICANT TEMPORARY AND PERMANENT AMCIT PRESENCE WHICH COULD BE BETTER PROTECTED IF EMBASSY RE-ESTABLISHED.

3. DESPITE DISCONTENT AMONG UGANDANS STEMMING FROM CONSUMER-GOOD SHORTAGES AND HATE IN SOME QUARTERS AS

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RESULT OF AMIN'S LIQUIDATION OF POTENTIAL OPPONENTS, HE

APPEARS TO BE FIRMLY ENTRENCHED IN POWER. KAMPALA BASED DIPLOMATS FEEL THAT, AS LONG AS HE CAN KEEP MILITARY HAPPY, THERE IS LITTLE CHANCE THAT ANYONE WILL BE ABLE TO TOPPLE HIM IN NEAR FUTURE. IF THIS ANALYSIS IS CORRECT, IT MAY NO LONGER BE IN USG INTEREST TO TAKE POSITION -- IMPLICITLY AT LEAST -- THAT REOPENING OF EMBASSY WHILE AMIN IS STILL AROUND WOULD BE UNTHINKABLE.

4. DESPITE RECENT LAPSES SUCH AS HILL CASE AND UN SPEECH, AMIN APPEARS, ACCORDING TO DIPLOMATIC OBSERVERS IN KAMPALA AS WELL AS SENIOR KENYA GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, TO BE LEARNING ARTS OF STATECRAFT RATHER MORE RAPIDLY AND EFFECTIVELY THAN ONE MIGHT HAVE EXPECTED ON BASIS OF HIS EARLIER BEHAVIOR. HIS GREATLY IMPROVED ABILITY TO HANDLE ENGLISH -- REPORTEDLY ACHIEVED AS RESULT OF HIS FORMER CLOSE ASSOCIATION WITH ELIZABETH BAGAYA -- IS A VALUABLE ASSET IN THIS REGARD. WHILE IT WOULD BE FOOLISH TO CONCLUDE THAT AMIN WILL NO LONGER BE TROUBLESOME FIGURE ON INTERNATIONAL SCENE, INFORMED OBSERVERS APPEAR CONVINCED THAT HE CAN AND DOES LEARN FROM EXPERIENCE AND THAT HIS UNDERSTANDING OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS HAS DEFINITELY IMPROVED AND WILL CONTINUE TO IMPROVE. AMIN'S CONDUCT DURING HIS MEETING WITH LINDSTROM TENDS TO SUPPORT THESE CONCLUSIONS.

5. IN CONTRAST WITH POOR SECURITY SITUATION TWO TO THREE YEARS AGO, AMERICAN AND EUROPEAN VISITORS AND RESIDENTS IN UGANDA NOW FEEL SAFE FROM HARASSMENT BY

AUTHORITIES, ALTHOUGH AS ELSEWHERE IN EAST AFRICA ECONOMICALLY MOTIVATED CRIME CONTINUES TO BE PROBLEM.

6. OUTLOOK FOR SECURITY OF AFRICANS LESS PROMISING; HOWEVER, AMIN APPEARS FOR MOMENT TO HAVE CEASED MAKING PEOPLE "DISAPPEAR". NEVERTHELESS MANY PROMINENT UGANDANS CONTINUE TO BE IMPRISONED EITHER TEMPORARILY OR INDEFINITELY. IF INDEED AMIN IS PURSUING SOMEWHAT LESS HARSH POLICY IN THIS REGARD THAN FORMERLY, IT MAY BE MAINLY BECAUSE HE NO LONGER FEELS HIS POSITION AS PRESIDENT IS THREATENED. DESPITE SEEMING IMPROVEMENT IN HIS BEHAVIOR, WE WOULD HAVE TO ANTICIPATE

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SOME CRITICISM FROM CONGRESS AND U.S. PUBLIC THAT REOPENING OF EMBASSY WOULD CONSTITUTE "ENDORSEMENT" OF USG OF AMIN'S VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS. WE WOULD BE LESS LIKELY TO GET CRITICISM ON THIS SCORE FROM AFRICAN AND OTHER COUNTRIES WHICH MAINTAIN DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS IN KAMPALA MAINLY TO REMAIN IN CLOSE TOUCH WITH AMIN AND WHAT IS GOING ON IN UGANDA.

7. ANOTHER SIGNIFICANT DISADVANTAGE OF REOPENING U.S. EMBASSY WOULD BE THAT AMIN MIGHT, AS REPORTED REFTEL, EXPECT OR AT LEAST HOPE FOR U.S. MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO REPLACE OR SUPPLEMENT SOVIET MILITARY ASSISTANCE. THEREFORE, IF DECISION WERE MADE TO REOPEN EMBASSY, IT WOULD HAVE TO BE MADE COMPLETELY CLEAR IN ADVANCE TO AMIN THAT SUCH ASSISTANCE WOULD NOT REPEAT NOT BE FEASIBLE IN FORESEEABLE FUTURE AS USG UNABLE AT PRESENT TO MEET NEEDS IN THIS FIELD OF AFRICAN COUNTRIES WHICH HAVE BEEN TRADITIONALLY FRIENDLY TO U.S.

8. AMIN WOULD AT MINIMUM PROBABLY EXPECT EARLY RESUMPTION OF SOME FORM OF ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE, BUT PERHAPS SOME HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE DESIGNED PRIMARILY TO HELP UGANDAN PEOPLE RATHER THAN PERPETUATE HIS RULE COULD BE DEvised WHICH WOULD AT SAME TIME BE SUPPORTIVE OF LONGER TERM U.S. INTERESTS IN UGANDA.

9. WHILE LIVING CONDITIONS FOR ANY AMERICANS ASSIGNED TO A REOPENED EMBASSY IN KAMPALA WOULD LEAVE SOMETHING TO BE DESIRED, PARTICULARLY INsofar AS CONSUMER GOODS AVAILABILITY IS CONCERNED, DIPLOMATIC CORPS NOW RESIDENT IN KAMPALA MANAGES TO OVERCOME THESE DIFFICULTIES THROUGH FREQUENT SHOPPING TRIPS TO ELDORET, KENYA, AND BY NORMAL DIPLOMATIC IMPORTATIONS. AMERICAN SCHOOL IN KAMPALA, BOTH PRIMARY AND SECONDARY, CONTINUES TO FUNCTION AND NOW HAS MORE STUDENTS (FROM UN AGENCIES MAINLY) THAN AT TIME OF CLOSURE OF U.S. EMBASSY MORE THAN TWO YEARS AGO. VANDALIZATION OF U.S. AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE LAST APRIL WOULD NECESSITATE SOME DIFFICULT REPAIR WORK, BUT OTHER EMBASSY HOUSES WHICH ARE LEASED OUT COULD BE RETURNED TO EMBASSY IN RELATIVELY SHORT PERIOD OF TIME. GERMAN AMBASSADOR STATED THAT U.S. EMBASSY OFFICE SPACE COULD  
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BE MADE USEABLE WITHIN ABOUT TWO WEEKS' TIME.

10. WHILE WE HERE IN NAIROBI ARE NOT IN POSITION TO ESTIMATE EXTENT OF POTENTIAL OPPOSITION BY U.S CONGRESS AND PUBLIC TO ANY PROPOSAL TO REOPEN EMBASSY IN KAMPALA, WE ARE INCLINED TO CONCLUDE THAT -- LEAVING ASIDE THIS FACTOR -- ADVANTAGES TO U.S. OF REOPENING EMBASSY WOULD OUTWEIGH DISADVANTAGES.  
MARSHALL

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## Message Attributes

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